



WENATCHEE VALLEY FIRE DEPARTMENT

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509-662-4734 - WenatcheeValleyFire.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Public meetings to learn more about fire benefit charge

Proposal will appear on the August 6, 2024, primary election ballot

Wenatchee, Wash. – Wenatchee Valley Fire Department is asking voters to consider a fire benefit charge on the August 6, 2024, primary election ballot. A benefit charge is a fairer way to fund emergency services compared to the current funding through property taxes.

Residents are encouraged to attend one of two public meetings hosted by Fire Chief Brian Brett to ask questions and learn more:

- Wednesday, July 24, at 6 p.m., at Station 1 (377 Eastmont Avenue, East Wenatchee)
- Saturday, July 27, at 10 a.m., at Station 11 (206 Easy Street, Wenatchee)

The information sessions will take place inside station apparatus bays (doors will be open) and light refreshments provided.

Currently, funding for emergency services comes from a fire levy paid through property taxes. The fire levy is based on a property's assessed value only.

"That means two houses of the same size can pay very different amounts depending on their location in our service area," says Chief Brett, "while the cost to put out a fire at either is the same."

Why a fire benefit charge?

With a fire benefit charge, the property tax levy is reduced to \$1.00 per \$1,000 of assessed value, and the benefit charge is calculated based on a building's square footage. Smaller buildings, such as residential homes, are charged less than larger commercial or industrial buildings with higher risk. This is because it takes fewer firefighters and fire trucks to put out a fire in a single-family home than a larger occupancy or commercial building. In most cases, homeowners will pay the same or less than they do now for a 24-hour fire and EMS response.

For example, in 2023, the owner of a 2,500 square-foot-home in Douglas County appraised at \$600,000 paid a fire levy of \$750. Under the proposed fire benefit charge, the owner would pay a total of \$718 – a savings of \$32.

A fire benefit charge must be approved by voters every six years. The amount of the benefit charge is then evaluated and set each year by the local board of fire commissioners in a public hearing. The benefit charge is included on annual property tax statements, and property owners have the right to appeal their benefit charge if they feel it is incorrect. All exemptions for seniors and disabled persons apply.

Interested in seeing your possible savings? Residents can visit the fire department's website – www.wenatcheevalleyfire.org – to use a Fire Benefit Charge Calculator and get an estimate of their costs for fire and EMS.

Voters in more than two dozen fire districts in the state have approved a fire benefit charge as a more balanced way to fund emergency services for their communities.

Please attend an upcoming information session or visit www.wenatcheevalleyfire.org to learn more. Chief Brian Brett also welcomes your questions at bbrett@wvfire.org or 509-662-4734.

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The Wenatchee Valley Fire Department is a fire authority providing fire and life safety services to 81,000 people over 211 square miles in the Wenatchee Valley. We were established in 2022 when voters approved combining Chelan County Fire District 1 and Douglas County Fire District 2 into the Wenatchee Valley Fire Department. We serve the Colockum, East Wenatchee, Malaga, Rock Island, Squilchuck Valley, Stemilt Basin, Sunnyslope, Trinidad area of Crescent Bar, Wenatchee Heights, and Wenatchee #1 and #2 Canyon.